



**MEDIA CONTACTS**

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## **22<sup>nd</sup> Navajo Nation Council approves energy development agreement between the Navajo Nation and Nabeeho' Power, L.L.C.**

**WINDOW ROCK** – On the final day of the summer session, the 22<sup>nd</sup> Navajo Nation Council approved Legislation No. 0457-12, approving on an energy development agreement between Nabeeho' Power, L.L.C. and the Navajo Nation.

Legislation No. 0457-12 permits the development of a solar power system and other infrastructure related to the capture, distribution, and transmission of solar energy on approximately 300 acres of land in the community of Iyanbito.

Legislation sponsor Council Delegate Charles Damon II (Báaháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí', Rock Springs, Tsayatoh) asked the Council to support the bill, noting that it received positive recommendations when considered by the Resources and Development Committee and Naabik'iyáti' Committee.

"The solar system industry is really booming and we would like to be a part of it so the Navajo People can benefit," said Delegate Damon.

Amber Schillinger, owner of Nabeeho' Power, L.L.C., said that she aspires to help Navajo People by bringing employment and economic development opportunities to Iyanbito.

"I would like to have the chance to create jobs and keep our Navajo scholarships here on the Nation," Schillinger said.

The bill is a contentious issue for the Iyanbito Chapter, resulting in the submission of eight chapter resolutions opposing the solar project.

Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau) explained to his colleagues that chapter constituents had many unanswered questions regarding the solar project, and motioned to table the legislation until those questions were answered.

The motion to table the legislation failed with a vote of 6-9.

"There are many questions the chapter has brought fourth," said Delegate Yazzie. "In all fairness, we need more clarification to make a solid decision."

Several Council members questioned the solar project's initial financing and requested assurance that the land would not sit undeveloped during the 25-year lifetime of the energy agreement.

Council Delegate Dwight Witherspoon (Black Mesa, Forest Lake, Hardrock, Pinon, Whippoorwill) explained the challenges that entrepreneurs face when starting a business on the Nation.

"Often we have model projects that don't move forward because their financing is not reputable," said Delegate Witherspoon. "Projects like this also face opposition from chapters, tribal administration, the Navajo Department of Justice, and even our own Energy Task Force."

Council Delegate LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse'Daa'Kaan, Upper Fruitland) motioned for an amendment, requiring Nabeeho' Power, L.L.C. to acquire and complete financing no later than 365 days after the signing of the bill. Failure to comply would require the energy agreement be reconsidered by the applicable oversight.

"I propose this amendment so that we are not sitting on this project 25-years down the road," said Delegate Bates.

The amendment passed with a vote of 10-5.

Speaking in support of the bill, Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) commended Nabeeho' Power, L.L.C. for working through the administrative process to create an economic opportunity.

"We should encourage young Navajo People to come home with their new found knowledge and start businesses," said Delegate Tsosie. "Our words are empty if we tell our children to work hard and then turn them away when they try to start business."

Delegate Yazzie asked Council members to respect the wishes of the elders in Iyanbito.

"I am glad we are debating this, but I stand with the people of Iyanbito and will vote against this bill," said Delegate Yazzie.

At the conclusion of the debate, Council members approved Legislation No. 0457-12 with a vote of 11-5.

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